

Abstract 529

TITLE: Predictors of Difficulty Inserting the Female Condom

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OBJECTIVES: Difficulty inserting the female condom is both common and negatively associated with use of the device. This presentation describes the frequency and nature of insertion difficulties and identifies predictors of insertion difficulty among woman at risk of STDs.

METHODS: As part of a prospective study of female condom efficacy, 1159 female STD clinic patients were taught how to insert the female condom using an anatomic model, then given an opportunity for self-insertion practice and a nurse-clinician check. Sociodemographic and psychosocial predictors of refusing the insertion practice and of difficulty inserting the female condom were identified using logistic regression.

RESULTS: Most women took advantage of the self-insertion practice. Only 59 (5%) refused usually due to disinterest in the female condom. Women who refused the practice reported a later sexual debut, never having a PAP test, not using tampons, and never using intravaginal contraceptives. Although refusers had more often heard of the female condom, they were less worried about pregnancy and STDs. Refusers were also more likely to have had undesired sex, let men put on male condoms, believe that male condom requests imply infidelity or lack of trust, have only a non-regular partner, and be unemployed. Of those who attempted self-insertion, 25 percent were unable to insert the female condom correctly on the first attempt. The most common error was not pushing the inner ring high enough into the vagina. Women who had difficulty inserting the female condom were older, had fewer pregnancies and live births, never expressed their sexual likes to a partner, let men put on male condoms, had past experience with intravaginal contraceptives, and had longer fingernails.

CONCLUSIONS: The predictors of refusal in this study may help to identify women for whom the female condom will be unacceptable and who may benefit more from an intervention that promotes male condoms, especially one that increases perceived risk and assertiveness. The predictors of insertion difficulty in this study may help to identify women who will need intensive skills training to become successful users of the female condom.

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